Social Policy from Above?

Europeanisation of Swedish Social Policy 1990-2019

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Abstract

At the same time as the European Union’s (EU) influence has grown, path-breaking changes in Sweden’s social policy characteristics have appeared. Previous research gives contradictory evidence on whether and how these developments relate, and it remains unknown to what extent the EU contributed to the changes observed in Sweden.

By operationalising four theories on the mechanisms of social policy change (institutionalism, power resources approach, new politics, and new social risks), using the EU as a driving force, and two diverging policy developments as outcomes, this thesis cast the net wider than previous research and applies process tracing methods to a selection of 339 policy documents to answer: (i) How has Europeanisation affected unemployment policy and family policy in Sweden, 1990-2019? (ii) To what extent can Europeanisation sufficiently explain the retrenchment in unemployment policy while family policies were expanded in the same period of time?

I find no support for the mechanisms of institutionalism and new politics, limited support for new social risk, and mixed support for the power resource approach explaining the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy. Although I found empirical support for parts of several, I conclude that no theory can sufficiently explain the complete causal chain of how the EU influence the two Swedish policy outcomes.

Keywords

Social policy change, Europeanisation, process tracing, welfare state, unemployment policy, family policy.
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1. Introduction

The Swedish welfare state has undergone two substantial changes simultaneously, social policy retrenchment and Europeanisation. This case study examines whether and to what extent there is a link between Swedish social policy change and integration into the European Union (EU).

Sweden has undergone a substantive change from being one of the most equalising, universal, and generous welfare states between 1970 and 1990. Its core welfare facets – universal coverage in social security, high employment, decommodification, and social rights – have witnessed significant downward changes in recent decades. Scholars have declared the Nordic welfare type, to which Sweden belongs, to be “under siege” (Kvist & Greve, 2011: 146), confronting a “radical” transition (Taylor-Gooby et al. 2017: 1) in social policy. This shift in social policy coincides with one of the most extensive structural development of the Swedish political economy in modern times, Sweden’s integration with the EU in 1995, which establishes laws that transcend national borders, redefine institutional conditions, and introduce new ideas and practices (Beckfield, 2019: 4f; Jacobsson & Sundström, 2006).

Looking at Sweden’s unemployment policy as an example of social policy change, the evidence is clear. The compensation levels of the insurance have been reduced, eligibility criteria have become stricter, and the duration of benefits shorter (Bäckman & Nelson, 2017; Sjöberg et al., 2021: 585). Understanding potential EU influence is important because state sovereignty and power are transferred, substantial budgets are involved, and the EU is a central topic in national elections. Yet, there still is no consensus among scholars that EU governance impacts domestic politics and the impact on social policy, where the EU is said to have little mandate, remains contested (Börzel & Risse, 2003: 60; Korpi, 2003: 16). Comparative scholars have linked the process of European integration to the erosion of social policy and the rise in inequality within Member States, including Sweden (Beckfield, 2019). While early Swedish case studies stress that Europeanisation plays a role in social policy change (Anderson, 1998), more recent studies argue the influence is exaggerated (Demokratirådet, 2010).

In sum, at the same time Swedish welfare broke the path of its previous social policy characteristics, the modes of governance have been rearranged, influencing how and in what areas the Swedish state has authority to act, and previous research gives contradictory evidence on how these juxtaposed developments relate. Hence, the extent to which the EU contributed to the changes observed in Sweden’s social policy remains unknown.
Yet, the puzzle regarding the EU’s potential impact is more complex than the EU merely leading to retrenchment on the domestic level, as the retrenchment of social policy in Sweden has not been universal across policy areas. The changes in the unemployment insurance system contrast the situation observed in family policy, where parental leave, child benefits, and childcare have remained stable or even shown an increase (Alm et al., 2019; Blomqvist & Palme, 2020). Consequently, if the EU matters, its impact differs between social policy areas.

Based on these puzzling outcomes, the thesis aims to trace potential mechanisms of the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy between 1990 and 2019 and analyse whether these mechanisms can explain the varying outcomes in Sweden’s social policy in the last decades.

The relevance of exploring the link and the EU as one crucial driving force relates to two key traditions in sociology. Firstly, the inquiry analyses how governmental structures, institutions, and actors – both at the EU- and domestic level – exercise power, influence, and create the legitimate order of the modern welfare state (Weber, 1964: 130; Jacobsson & Sundström, 2006, 2016). Secondly, social policies – here represented by unemployment- and family policies – and their conditions relate to the existence of a social citizenship (Marshall, 1950; Korpi, 1983), which demonstrates how the state and the political order construct social relations regarding citizens’ risks, equality, poverty, social exclusion, and life chances more broadly.

Sweden is a puzzling case since the rise in inequality, decrease in cash benefits, and hollowing out of social rights contrast what once was expected from Sweden. Additionally, Sweden presents a critical case for analysing the EU’s impact on domestic social policy due to Sweden’s position as an archetypical well-developed welfare state, the country’s position as a policy leader at the EU level (Johnson 2005: 11), and the EU’s weak mandate in social policy. Based on these aspects, there is reason to believe that social policy change and the potential effects of Europeanisation should be safeguarded most extensively in Sweden. Thus, if Europeanisation of social policy is present in the critical case of Sweden, it is likely also to be present elsewhere.

The thesis contributes with an innovative process tracing design exploring the Europeanisation of social policy in a selection of 1800 government and policy documents. Secondly, while previous studies only presented evidence from parts of the causal process of the Europeanisation of social policy and used a limited set of theories (Anderson, 1998; Beckfield, 2019; Demokratirådet, 2010), this case study looks at the full causal chain from the EU, through mechanisms of domestic politics, to policy outcomes (developed further in Figure 1). In doing so, I present a wider as well as stricter test of the EU’s influence on Swedish social policy by applying four established theories on social policy change to two diverging policy outcomes.
1.1 Aim and Research Questions

As there is disagreement on the extent to which the EU has affected the Member States’ social policy changes, this case study provides within-case depth in a critical case to discern potential mechanisms of Europeanisation of social policy. This thesis aims to trace potential mechanisms of the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy between 1990 and 2019 and analyse whether and how the mechanisms can explain the diverging outcomes in Sweden’s social policy in the last decades. In doing so, the study answers the following research questions:

1. How has Europeanisation affected unemployment policy and family policy in Sweden from 1990-2019?

2. To what extent can Europeanisation sufficiently explain the retrenchment in unemployment policy while family policies were expanded in the same period of time?

The first question is descriptive, empirically targeting if and how the EU’s influence the two policy outcomes during the period. The second question is analytical, emphasising the mechanisms that build the causal link and exploring to what extent they can provide a sufficient explanation of the causal chain from EU level drivers to social policy outcomes.

Given that Europeanisation is a causal phenomenon, the study resides on framing a causal case, visualised in Figure 1 (cf., Buller & Gamble, 2002; Featherstone, 2003). Modes of EU governance, further distinguished into three subcategories, are drivers at the EU level. The two diverging developments in Swedish unemployment- and family policy are domestic policy outcomes. The study’s focal point is to distinguish what comes between them, the mediating mechanisms of Swedish domestic politics. In the study, these mechanisms are operationalised based on four sociological theories on social policy change, formulating the potential causal link of the case. The thesis is limited to the direct influence of the EU. This means that domestic political actors change their behaviour because of the EU, affecting policy outcomes. The thesis does not encompass indirect influence, such as how political parties affect each other at the EU level or how domestic politics become Europeanised because citizens consider themselves as part of the EU. Influence from other organisations active in the European context, such as ILO, OECD, or NATO, are excluded too.

![Figure 1. The Case: The causal process of Europeanisation of Swedish social policy](image-url)
2. Theory and Previous Research

The following sections draw on previous research to ground four hypotheses of the causal process under examination. In the subsequent sections, these theories are operationalised and then empirically tested using process tracing (Bennett, 2010; Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 18f). This section is divided into four parts. The first two subsections address the empirical evidence of changes in Swedish unemployment and family policy, as well as the four theoretical explanations of these changes. The two last subsections describe the process of Europeanisation and integrates the four theories of social policy change with this framework.

2.1 Unemployment- and Family Policy in Sweden

Unemployment- and family policy have occupied a central position within Sweden’s overarching goals of achieving full employment, defamilisation, and fostering high labor market participation among men and women (Björnberg, 2012; Duvander, 2008). Additionally, these two facets are sociologically connected because the ability to engage in work and the social vulnerabilities associated with unemployment are contingent upon family dynamics and prevailing family policies (Esping-Andersen, 2016: 46). Along these lines, the Swedish welfare state has been characterised by family- and active labour market policies (ALMPs) – now broadly emphasised by the EU – already from the 1950s (Anderson, 1998).

Sweden’s unemployment insurance system has a voluntary state-subsidised character (i.e., Ghent-system), meaning that it is not universally provided by the government but requires membership in unemployment funds managed by trade unions. This system comprises two components: a minimum basic insurance (seldom increased after 2000, see Table 1) and an optional part based on a percentage of an individual’s previous earnings. The second part has a relatively low ceiling, and up to 70% of all unemployed individuals reached this maximum daily amount in 2019 (Akademikernas a-kassa, 2023). To qualify for either part, individuals must have worked a specific amount during the previous year, with the income-related part also requiring membership in an unemployment fund (SFS 1997: 238).

Table 1 displays the critical changes in Sweden’s unemployment insurance from 1990 to 2019. The 1990s recession implied a significant turning point in unemployment policy. Unemployment rates surged from 2% to 12% (and have not been below 5% since), causing the self-financed unemployment insurance system to fail. As a result, the funds had to rely on state
intervention, prompting politicians to initiate reforms (Anderson, 1998: 260; Nelson, 2017). As visible in Table 1, the right government of the 90s initiated the initial major reforms. Surprisingly, the Social Democratic Party (SAP), traditionally tied to the social policy expansion, also adjusted its stance on fiscal austerity and state finances. Consequently, Swedish governments, regardless of their political affiliation, extensively reformed the system between 1991 and 1997 (Anderson, 1998; Klitgaard, 2007).

The 2000s started with few changes compared to the years prior. However, it is noteworthy that despite being in power from 1994 to 2006, the SAP did not initiate any major reforms to reverse the downward trend. Few reforms had a significant impact except for the raise of the maximum benefit in 1997. For example, increasing the maximum daily compensation has little effect when wages grow since workers will continue to reach the maximum ceiling. The Reinfeldt government initiated an activation employment policy and targeted the financing of the unemployment system, as shown in the table, this implied several major changes. Consequently, the coverage rate of income-related insurance benefits declined from 80 to 40 percent between 2000 and the mid-2010s (Nelson, 2017: 290). When SAP came into power again in 2014, improvements were slow, and when they came in 2016, they were modest.

The Swedish family policy package includes three main parts: parental leave, universal child benefits, and publicly financed childcare (Blomqvist & Palme, 2020; Duvander, 2008). The system as a whole is largely based on a dual-earner family model that supports women’s (and men’s) continuous labour market participation when forming a family and provides low support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Bildt</td>
<td>Increased membership fees for unions funds (E-). Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Bildt</td>
<td>Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Bildt</td>
<td>5 waiting days introduced (D-). Max benefits cut from 50% to 80% (C-). Increased min compensation (C+). Eligibility tightened (E-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Bildt/SAP</td>
<td>Stricter qualification (Q). New financing rules (F-). Increased minimum compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Max benefits cut from 80% to 75% (C-). Eligibility tightened (E-). Minimum compensation lowered (C-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Raise in max benefits to 80% (C+). Eligibility rules tightened (E-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Increased min compensation (C+). Stricter qualification (Q-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Duration of daily max compensation split into two periods, the first period increased, second period remains at previous levels (C-). Increased minimum compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Increased daily maximum compensation in first period (C+). Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Eligibility and qualifying conditions tightened (B-, Q-). Split max benefit, lower second period at 70% (C-). Removal of the split daily max from 2001, max set to the lower period (C-). Increased state contribution from unions funds (F+). Increased membership fees for unions funds (E-). Eligibility by studies abolished (E-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>7 waiting days introduced (previously at 5) (D-). Increased state contribution from unions funds (F-). Expanded eligibility to people on certain social services (E-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Temporary ease of qualifying conditions (Q+ temporary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Duration of daily max compensation split, both periods compensation increased higher than in 2015 (C+). Increased min compensation (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>6 waiting days introduced (previously at 7) (D+).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Key changes in Sweden’s unemployment insurance 1990-2019. The letters indicate reform characteristics: + or - indicate the change effect on social rights. C = compensation, D = duration/access, E = eligibility, F = finance, Q = qualification. Data from propositions and the SPIN Database (Nelson et al., 2020).
for traditional family constellations. To a noticeable extent, family policies in Sweden have been framed as employment and gender equality supporting policies since the 1970’s. An argument reoccurring in EU’s childcare-, family-, gender equality-, and the social investment model (European Commission, 2013, 2018; Van Gerven, 2022). The thesis focuses on parental leave as a representation of Swedish family policy as it is motivated by similar ideas as the unemployment insurance scheme: facilitating strong labour market attachment for men and women combining work and family (Duvander & Lammi-Taskula, 2012).

In 2019, a couple was entitled to 480 days of leave with flexible arrangements (i.e., full-, half-, quarter-, or one-eighth of full-time) equally divided but transferable between the parents, except for a quota of 90 days per parent. The first 390 days are based on 77.6% of previous earnings, with the last 90 days at a guaranteed amount of 180 SEK/day. To be eligible for the income benefit, the parent must have worked for 240 continuous days with daily earnings above the basic amount. A non-eligible parent receives a flat rate of 250 SEK/day for the first 390 days. For children born since 2014, the leave has to be used before the child turns twelve. As visible in Table 2, the current levels result from a stable expansion of the parental leave system during the last decades.

In 1974, Sweden became the first country in the world to adopt shared dual-earner parental leave, and has been prioritising gender equality, children’s rights, and female labour market attachment since (Duvander & Lammi-Taskula, 2012). Three elements greatly contrast the development of unemployment insurance. Firstly, the parental leave system has broad support and the right

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Guarantee benefit increased to 64 SEK/day (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Individualisation of parental leave, half assigned to each one of the parents, but transferable between partners (Eq+). Quota (1 month assigned to each parent) introduced (Eq+). Income-related benefit reduced from 90% to 80% (C-). Guarantee benefit reduced to 60 SEK/day (C-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Income-related benefit reduced to 75% (C-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Income-related benefit increased to 80% (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Temporary parental leave can be assigned to someone outside the family (D+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Quota increased to 2 months per parent (Eq+). Duration of benefit increased from 450 to 480 days (D+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Basic benefit increased to 150 SEK/day (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Basic benefit increased to 180 SEK/day (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Earnings ceiling increased to 295 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Strengthened parental leave rights – preventing employers from rejecting a job applicant because the individual intends to request future leave (D+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Earnings ceiling increased to 403 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Gender equality bonus: couples who share leave more equally receive economic bonus (Eq+ C+). Income-related benefit decrease to 77.6% (C-).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Earnings ceiling increased to 428 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Earnings ceiling decreased to 424 000 SEK annually (C–).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Double days introduced, permitting parents to be at home together on leave for up to 30 days (D+). Earnings ceiling increased to 424 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Basic benefit increased to 225 SEK/day (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Reinfeldt</td>
<td>Parental leave payment available to child is of age 12 (previously at 8) (D+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Quota increased to 3 months per parent (Eq+). Earnings ceiling increased to 445 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Gender equality bonus abolished (Eq–). Earnings ceiling increased to 447 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Earnings ceiling increased to 455 000 SEK annually (C+).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Key changes in Sweden’s parental leave system 1990-2019. Changes in temporary parental allowance not included. The letters indicate reform characteristics, + or – indicate the change effect on social right’s. C = compensation, D= duration/access, Eq = gender equality. Data from proposition and the International Network on Leave Policies & Research Annual Reports 2005-2019.
governments do not stand out as advocates in favour of dismantling the system (Duvander et al., 2005). Secondly, the 1990s recession caused cutbacks to compensation levels, but the system has since expanded. Lastly, the income ceiling is high enough for most parents to be unaffected, unlike the ceiling of unemployment insurance (Duvander, 2014). In relation to this, the next section uncovers four theories on social policy change.

### 2.2 Four Theories on Social Policy Change

Changes to welfare states and social policies have been explained by four different, yet sometimes intertwined, theories: institutionalism, power resource approach, new politics, and new social risks.

Institutionalism theory (IT) of social policy change is often divided into sociological, rational-choice, and historical approaches. Still, all acknowledge the structural, gradual, and statist elements of actors’ preferences in social policy development (Orloff & Skocpol, 1984: 730f). The welfare state, perceived as an outcome of the institutionalisation of social and political struggles and demands, institutionalises political decisions, behaviors, rules, and meanings (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009; Skocpol, 1985: 22). As a result, IT commonly stresses the inertia and taken-for-grantedness of the welfare state and social policies once they have initially been formed, giving rise to concepts like institutional path-dependence, where organisations and institutions enforce each other over time (Pierson, 2000: 812). Thus, IT is more apt to explain continuity than change, which fits well with Sweden’s family policy developments. In contrast, institutional and social policy change, like those in Sweden’s unemployment policies, is argued to occur when the rules of the game and the enforcement of them open up for new rule interpretation. New political institutions, like the EU, can work as leverage points for such rule reconfiguration as the policy feedback is not entirely predetermined by the institutions already in place (Mahoney & Thelen, 2009: 4; Starke, 2008: 30). To trace such change processes, institutionalist scholars tend to conduct in-depth case studies targeting political and constitutional veto points, policy feedback, and path dependence (Starke, 2008: 30ff).

The Power resource approach (PRA) originates from a Marxist class-based notion of conflict between capital and labor, arguing that the allocation of power resources among collective actors determines their ability to advocate for their interests. These power resources can be related to the mobilisation of people, such as labour unions and advocacy groups; economic power, such as corporate- or individual wealth; and organisational resources such as political parties and institutions. The welfare state, its institutions, and social policies are shaped by how
the collective actors use their power resources for political mobilisation (Korpi, 1983, 1989, 2006; Korpi & Shalev, 1980). The theory argues that the existence of the welfare state closely aligns with the mobilisation of left-leaning collective actors such as unions and leftist parties, investing in a social citizenship – a system of social rights enabling citizens to seek state support in times of socioeconomic vulnerability (Marshall, 1950: 8f; Korpi, 2006: 168). The opposing scenario wherein leftist groups lose their influence leading to retrenchment. Thus, the PRA requires recent changes in Sweden’s unemployment and family policies to be traceable to the power resources of such actors. Scholars of the PRA usually conduct quantitative inquiries and have, through comparative cross-country analysis, established how the power of leftist groups determines the existence of an encompassing social policies, while the opposite is true for right-wing actors (Allan & Scruggs, 2004; Korpi, 2003; Korpi & Palme, 2003).

The theory of New politics (NP), which is more explicitly about retrenchment than the previous theories, directly responds to the “old” politics in the PRA. NP argues that the welfare state, with its many beneficiaries, restructures the politics of the welfare state, making social policies too popular even for radical neo-liberal reform advocates to dismantle (Pierson, 1994). Thus, as the political scene has changed, the PRA that served to explain social policy expansion is unfit to explain its decline. Pierson defended well into the 1990s that welfare state retrenchment was unlikely – today, few social researchers would agree with such a statement.

Still, the NP theorists describe how politics of retrenchment can occur. Old politics is irrelevant in explaining social policy decline because voters and large groups of beneficiaries are deeply embedded in the welfare state and want it to prevail (Pierson, 1994; 1996). Since no voters are won by initiating retrenchment, elected officials required to implement retrenchment policies (e.g., for austerity reasons) need to avoid blaming. As a result, “retrenchment is generally an exercise in blame avoidance rather than credit claiming” (Pierson 1996: 145) shaped by blaming other political actors (e.g., the previous government) or structural factors (e.g., the EU).

New social risks (NSR), grounded in functionalism, highlight how modern social conditions within welfare states give rise to new risks contrasting the circumstances underpinning the traditional welfare state characterised by high economic growth, stable manufacturing sectors, and nuclear families (Taylor-Gooby, 2004, 2017). Four interconnected processes generate these NSRs. Firstly, women entering the labor market reshape family dynamics and gender roles, impacting the interplay between work and family care. Secondly, demographic shifts, including low fertility rates and increased life expectancy, amplify the care needs of the elderly, traditionally a women’s burden, and intensify pressure on pension systems. Thirdly, factors
such as weak economic growth, deindustrialisation, and globalisation have formed a post-industrial labor market typified by prolonged unemployment and a prevalence of the working poor, with education determining socioeconomic status more extensively. Lastly, inadequate social security coverage for these groups, coupled with weak economic growth, urges states to curtail public spending and introduce privatisation (Bonoli, 2005; Taylor-Gooby, 2004, 2017). Social policy change emerges in two combined steps. Firstly, the NSR groups of youth, women, immigrants, and poorly educated exhibit greater heterogeneity compared to the old welfare state groups (i.e., the protagonists in PRA). This heterogeneity exerts pressure on specific social policies, such as childcare and educational grants, rather than unified welfare programs, generating a demand for social reform. Secondly, targeting particular population segments, as opposed to universal schemes, is commonly associated with lower costs and maintenance. As a result, the state is motivated to introduce new social policies at the expense of the older, leading to change in specific areas while preserving or expanding others (Bonoli, 2005: 3).

2.3 Europeanisation and Social Policy Change
The following subsection focuses on the Europeanisation of domestic social policy outlined in previous research. First conceptually and after that from the two contrasting views in previous research, generally and in the Swedish case.

In this study, Europeanisation is viewed as a process or situation where structural modes of European governance affect domestic politics (Buller & Gamble, 2002; Featherstone, 2003), hence establishing the first two parts of the causal case in Figure 1. Modes of European governance and domestic politics are broad concepts, allowing the research to investigate several potential mechanisms of impact derived from previous theories on social policy change and highlighting the interplay of institutions, actors, norms, and ideas. Previous literature identifies and uses three forms of Europeanisation, known as positive-, negative-, and frame integration (see Featherstone, 2003; Fliqstei, 2009; Héritier, 2001; Leibfried, 2006; Liebfried & Obinger 2008; Radaelli, 2004; Scharpf, 1995; Schmidt, 2021). The three forms of integration are important because it informs what the different forms of EU influence can look like and helps empirically determine the influence, whereas the four theories are about the actors who does the influencing (i.e., the mechanisms).

Positive integration refers to governance, or formal decisions, at the EU level. This ‘rule-making’ enforces specific political arrangements at the domestic level, which the Member
States have to adapt to under the supremacy of EU regulations. Positive integration is, in this sense, a direct form of positively prescribed institutional or policy measures (e.g., positive integration under the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) in Sweden in Jacobsson, 2005).

Negative integration refers to institutionalisation and implies how EU legislation and procedures reform the ‘rules of the game’ domestically. From this dimension, the EU emerges as a political opportunity structure, giving leverage in line with the interests of some actors and against the interests of others. Hence, negative integration relates to the domestic power distribution among domestic actors more explicitly than positive integration (e.g., negative integration in France through rule innovation and interpretation in Le Galès, 2001).

Framing integration is often considered the weakest form of Europeanisation and indicates a change in actors’ belief systems at the domestic level. Consequently, this third dimension is the most implicit amongst the three and changes actors’ behaviour and strategies and thus their ‘rule adaptation’. Although the characteristics of frame integration complicate empirical analysis as it requires knowledge about actors’ beliefs, it can be observed in how domestic actors adapt to the EU in terms of compliance, negotiation, or conflict (e.g., frame integration in Swedish municipalities’ over-marketisation of social housing in Hettne, 2020).

Shifting from questions on conceptualisation to empirical evidence, there is a debate in the literature regarding the Europeanisation of domestic social policy. I will begin by highlighting the opposing views on a more general level and finish with the Swedish case.

The scholars arguing that the EU has a weak impact usually underline three elements. Firstly, welfare states differ (Esping-Andersen, 1990), and consequently so does the Europeanisation of them. As expected, there is a significant divergence in the effect of Europeanisation depending on the country, policy area, and time period (Börzel, 2005; Featherstone, 2003), making general conclusions regarding the impact of Europeanisation complex and rare. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the EU has historically had a limited involvement in social policy and welfare issues. Generally, the EU takes a supporting rather than enforcing role in social policy, although the EU’s involvement has increased in recent years (Korpi, 2003; Schmidt, 2021). Thus, from a path dependence point of view and related to the perspective of NSR, it is unlikely that social protection will be regulated anywhere else than nationally. Thirdly, Europeanisation is often thought of as a matter of globalisation, and measures of globalisation (e.g., trade and capital openness) are usually found to have an ambiguous (Leibrecht et al., 2011; Swank, 2021) or only marginally negative (Swank, 2005; Greve & Paster, 2022) impact on social policy and welfare regimes. Likewise, since Europeanisation
implies that the Member States align with the European model, prevailing Europeanisation should result in greater similarity among the Member States. Still, researchers exploring the presence of welfare and policy convergence seldom uncover substantial evidence supporting its existence (Swank, 2021).

The opposed group of scholars conveys that Europeanisation plays a significant role and tends to emphasise four interconnected elements – the unevenness between positive- and negative integration, marketisation, regime competition, and the EU’s judicial primacy. The first element is linked to IT and arises because the EU’s institutional structure requires positive integration to be consensus-based to a larger extent than the economic and judicial forces behind negative integration. This unevenness creates political constraints on EU level social policy while also shaping institutional structures for market integration, thereby subjecting domestic social regulations and state interventions to market pressures and judicial constraints. Competition and free markets are thus enhanced, and political interference (social policy) is undermined (Majone, 2005; Liebfried & Obinger, 2008; Scharpf, 1995, 1997; Streeck, 1998). Smith (2006) describes it simply: EU can be said to offer “carrots” for negative market integration, but no “sticks” in terms of social policy, creating spill over effects of the market into the social policy.

The second element concerns how the EU’s economic regulation and market competition oppose traditional decommodifying aspects of the welfare state and can, therefore, be viewed as a mix of the IT and PRA perspectives. Researchers argue that marketisation leads to several outcomes: downward convergence in welfare state reforms driven by market adaptation (Sinn, 1998; Moreno & Palier, 2005); the emergence of new actors, norms, structures, and identities in critical welfare areas like healthcare (Martinsen & Vrangbæk, 2008); individualisation of insurance systems (Van Gerven & Ossewaarde, 2012); and the ascent of technocratic capitalism, compelling welfare states to prioritise serving, enabling, and activating the market as their primary goal over safeguarding social rights (Beckfield, 2019).

The third element, also linked to IT, is about how the EU enforces competition between the Member States by the establishment of the four freedoms of goods, people, services, and capital, removing technical, legal, and bureaucratic barriers to citizens’ and corporations’ free trade and business (Streeck, 1998). This development is present as social benefits cannot be restricted based on territorial or citizenship accounts, threatening the effectiveness of domestic social rights provision (Leibfried, 2006; Leibfried & Obinger, 2008). It also impacts the tax politics of the Member States since the mobility of production, workforce, and capital pressure Member States into an intensified race-to-the-bottom tax competition to keep workers, corporations, and
capital, in turn shaping welfare states redistributive policy choices (Genschel & Jachternfuchs 2011; Genschel, Kemmerling & Seils, 2011; Scharpf, 1997).

Lastly, research underlining the element of judicial Europeanisation starts from the unique supremacy doctrine of EU law (Craig & De Búrca, 2015: 256f). Related to how negative integration overshadows positive integration, EU governance is weak in terms of coercion and redistribution but strong judicially. This gives the European Court of Justice (ECJ), national courts (through preliminary ruling), and legal entities (through litigation) such as citizens, interest organisations, and corporations, power at the expense of national sovereignty (Stone Sweet, 2004; 2010). Since the market is what the EU regulates the most, the legal leverage for market mechanisms is extensive. If domestic social policy directly or indirectly affects these market mechanisms (e.g., the four freedoms), EU jurisdiction can oppose those social interests (Alter, 2000).

Focusing on the Swedish context only, the division is still present. Since the beginning of Sweden’s membership, Jacobsson & Sundström (2006; 2016; 2020) have looked at the Europeanisation of the state apparatus more generally in three survey waves with governmental officials. In sum, they conclude that the EU has made it increasingly difficult for Swedish politicians and policy-makers to decide what turns into politics due to how bottom-up and from-within decision-making structures are increasingly less important, and how the EU’s decision-making is more expert oriented, more complex, and less precise (Jacobsson & Sundström 2006: 41). Over time, they find that Swedish public administration turns towards the EU as it follows EU demands more passively and are less responsive to national politicians (Jacobsson & Sundström 2020: 8ff). Anderson (1998), who looks at Swedish social policy retrenchment during the 1990s as an outcome of concludes that Sweden, as a small export dependent state, is sensitive to increased market competition and regime competition, forcing even the SAP to downscale social policy programs. Lastly, Demokratirådet (2010) confirms the Europeanisation of politics and public administration but describes the speculations of an extensive Europeanisation of welfare as exaggerated, as universalism prevails without any sign of convergence. Thus, the question of what role the EU plays in domestic social policy change, and what theory is apt to explain it, remains.

2.4 Social Policy Change by Europeanisation?

Above, four theories of social policy change were described. In this subsection, drawing on previous research on Europeanisation, the same theories are linked to the EU as a driving force
and Sweden’s diverging social policy outcomes to formulate hypotheses of the mechanisms under examination. Theoretically grounding the mechanisms as hypotheses constitutes a central step in process tracing methods as it informs the empirical explanation of the puzzling outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; Bennett, 2010). Put simply, it tells the researcher where to look and what needs to be found for the theory to provide a sufficient explanation. Each one of the four theories will be hypothesised in turn.

From the view of IT, empirically analysing the EU’s influence has to do with the institutional structure that enforces specific decision-making processes, political conduct, and interpretations (cf., Fligstein, 2009). Hence, adopting an institutionalism standpoint, the EU can be perceived as an entity possessing its distinct logic that dissolves the institutional taken-for-grantedness of the former domestic ‘only game in town’ concerning unemployment and family policy, thus breaking old policy feedback. **Hypothesis 1**: According to IT, EU influence on the diverging policy outcomes in Sweden took place through (a) EU’s judicial constraints in relation to restricting unemployment benefits, but not in relation to parental leave, and (b) EU’s recommendations to limit unemployment benefits, and maintain or expand parental leave.

Looking from the PRA, the EU can undermine the power of leftist national collective actors and facilitate rightist globalised capital since the political centre is moved to a supranational level and fragmented between countries, thus being an obstacle in the way of effective realisation of interest and domestic policymaking. Additionally, the welfare state, as an outcome of politics regulating the market (Esping-Andersen, 1985) opposes the EU’s ambition to remove market constraints through judicial and economic means. **Hypothesis 2**: According to PRA, EU influence on the diverging policy outcomes in Sweden took place through modes of EU governance (a) weakening leftist actors, and (b) strengthening rightist actors.

As for NP, austerity forces governments to dismantle social policies despite their broad support, making blame avoidance the only option. In domestic politicians dismantling initiatives, the EU can offer gateways to blame avoidance since retrenchment reforms can be framed as an EU demand (Pierson 1996: 177-178). **Hypothesis 3**: According to NP, EU influence on the diverging policy outcomes in Sweden took place through Swedish politicians (a) initiating cutbacks in the unemployment benefit by blaming demands from the EU, and (b) expanding parental leave due lack of EU demands to blame and/or too broad public support.

Lastly, from the NSR perspective, the EU must institutionalise and recommend policies targeting new risks rather than old, in turn having a political effect on domestic political preferences. In the literature, it has been highlighted that the EU’s social policy concerning old
risks is weak, while its focus on new risks is much greater. Childcare, work-life balance, and life-long learning are part of the EU’s social agenda. In contrast, social insurance coordination is considered a thing of the past (Taylor-Gooby, 2004: 22). **Hypothesis 4**: According to NSR, EU influence on the diverging policy outcomes in Sweden took place through Swedish politicians acknowledging EU recommendations to (a) investment in new social risks, such as parental leave, and (b) disinvest in old risks, such as unemployment benefits.

The hypotheses formulated based on IT and NSR lie close to each other, which makes it difficult to differentiate them empirically. This is partly a result of the width of IT, making it compatible with other theories (also with PRA, given the institutionalisation of power resources). In this case, since the NSR hypothesis is more specific, saying something about the content of the EU’s influence, it is treated as a better empirical description than IT if both are confirmed at the same time. If the IT hypothesis is confirmed but not the NSR, then the EU’s influence is not about new risks versus old but other elements.

### 3. Methodology

This section develops the methodological framework of the thesis. Firstly, process tracing as a method is explained before moving to the case selection. In the third subsection, the hypotheses on the mechanisms of Europeanisation of Swedish social policy are operationalised, and the document review is discussed. Lastly, ethical issues are considered.

#### 3.1 Process Tracing: Explain Puzzling Outcomes

Process tracing methods come in three forms: theory-developing, theory-testing, and outcome-explaining – this thesis belongs to the third as it examines the outcomes of a causal process. Additionally, it is well suited as outcome-explaining process tracing is most common for case studies and has a significant place in research on EU integration (Schimmelfenning, 2014: 98). Outcome-explaining process tracing addresses a puzzling historical outcome to produce a sufficient explanation of the mechanisms causing that outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 11ff). In all forms of process tracing, causal inference is derived from within-case evidence, known as diagnostic evidence, which confirms or rejects formulated hypotheses of the mechanisms at work (Bennett, 2010; Bennett & Checkel, 2014). Put simply, process tracing is about getting beyond correlations between X and Y, capturing the mechanisms in between.
In doing so, the outcome-explaining scientific process takes three critical steps. First are mechanisms conceptualised from previous theory – these are the mechanisms in the four theories that have been explained and hypothesised above, and operationalised below (see Table 3). Secondly, the mechanisms are traced empirically – this part unfolds in the analysis. Lastly, it is evaluated whether a sufficient explanation of the outcome has been found in any of the operationalised mechanisms – hence the concluding section (Beach & Pedersen 2013: 19).

Process tracing operates from a different epistemological logic than statistical methods analysing causal links. In statistical methods, the researcher establishes causality from a probabilistic examination of mean causal effects in a representative and sufficiently large sample of a population, answering if and how X covariates with Y. In contrast, probabilities are meaningless in process tracing due to the within-case sample. Instead, it applies a Bayesian methodology where causality is logically grounded in the how of the explanation, establishing a rational degree of belief in a proposition given the evidence we have, answering whether X is reasonable or sufficient to cause Y (Beach, 2016; Beach & Pedersen 2013; Fairfield & Charman, 2017). Thus, process tracing is limited in terms of empirical generalisation, but gains in addressing the inherent complexity and interplay of social policy systems and their development (Bennett, 2010; Kay & Baker, 2015: 5), hence aligning with the aim of the thesis.

Consequently, generalisation in process tracing is only possible theoretically since the within-case empirical examination is not transferable across cases. With a well-grounded theoretical framework and case selection, the accuracy of theories in explaining a puzzling outcome can be tested and later applied to other cases to draw more general empirical conclusions (Kay & Baker 2015; Pouliot 2014: 239). In other words, the mechanism of the theories conceptualised, operationalised, and tested in this thesis can be transferred to other cases, especially given the similarities across welfare states established in regime theory and the current crises of the Nordic welfare model in general (cf., Kvist & Greve, 2011; Greve & Paster, 2022), while the potential empirical process of the mechanisms stays in the Swedish context.

3.2 Case Selection: The Puzzle of Sweden

As outlined above, outcome-explaining process tracing targets a puzzling outcome to generate a sufficient explanation of the mechanisms behind it. In this case, the puzzling diverging outcomes of Swedish social policy change – possible to address as a whole – have been fixated further by the introduction of Europeanisation as one, but not the only, initiating driver of the causal chain. Beyond centering the scientific relevance of the investigated outcome, this casing
(Ragin, 2000) is necessary given the unfeasibility of addressing all potential drivers of social policy change in a master’s thesis. Thus, it is explored in the process tracing whether Europeanisation, through any of the four theories, can provide a sufficient explanation of the outcomes.

Looking at Sweden and not elsewhere is motivated by the puzzling outcome of the Swedish case – the path breaking social policy changes – and the country’s position as a least-likely case regarding the potential Europeanisation of social policy. The least-likely design originates from the misfit criteria in Europeanisation research: For new policies to be an effect of the EU, there must be a misfit, implying that the EU caused a policy change distinguishable from what the welfare regime used to be (Börzel & Risse, 2003). Sweden is a critical case based on the misfit criteria as one would expect – based on Sweden as an archetypical welfare state, policy leader, and the EU’s weak social policy mandate – the misfit to be small.

Since the EU reasonably affected Sweden’s decision to join and how Sweden fulfilled the political requirements to be eligible for the union, the Europeanisation of Swedish politics started before Sweden joined in 1995. Therefore, the analysis starts from 1990 to capture central political discourses and changes prior entry. Due to Covid-19 and the temporary changes made in Sweden’s social insurance systems during the pandemic, 2019 is used as an endpoint so that the mechanisms are traced under “normal” circumstances.

Lastly, it was selected to look at unemployment- and parental leave policy. These two social policy areas provide a reasonable scope, a sociologically relevant comparison in light of the work-family nexus, and most importantly, create a strict test of Europeanisation of Swedish social policy. For Europeanisation to affect social policy, broadly speaking, it needs to explain diverging outcomes. This test is stricter than the one used in previous process tracing studies in the Swedish context. Anderson (1998) looks at pension-, sickness- and unemployment insurance, which all declined during the period of their examination.

### 3.3 Operationalisation and Data

Essential in process tracing is how the hypothesised mechanisms should be operationalised to assess the relevant actors, how their interest is formed, how they act, and where this can be measured (Schimmelfenning, 2014: 105f). In this case, it is also necessary to elucidate the interplay between structure and agency while identifying the mechanisms that serve as interactive links between the realms of EU and domestic activities (Featherstone, 2003: 13). To
do so, the thesis formulated deductively four hypotheses of how modes of EU governance change domestic politics. We can expect certain actors or institutions to be involved in activities building the causal chain from modes of EU governance to domestic politics, altering policy outcomes (cf., Beach, 2016: 465; Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 40ff). Hence, there are three essential parts in operationalising the causal chain: the EU, domestic politics, and policy change (see Figure 1). And two elements linking them: actors or institutions and activities. To measure the existence of a causal chain linking the parts, it is reasonable to expect that the link would leave a form of “empirical fingerprint” (i.e., predicted evidence) (Beach, 2016: 465ff). In Table 3, the parts, the links, and the fingerprints for each of the four hypotheses, are operationalised as mechanisms of Europeanisation of Swedish social policy. The table should be read accordingly for each hypotheses: In Part 1, the actors or institution described in the first “box” engages in an activity (the “box” underneath) which in turn affects the actors or institutions in Part 2. This influence is predicted to leave an empirical fingerprint outlined in the third and final “box”. The process is repeated from Part 2 to Part 3, thus building the causal chain.

The mechanisms are not mutually exclusive and vary temporally in their accuracy in explaining the outcome. This is why different mechanisms can leave evidence in the same data source (e.g., in governmental propositions). If two or more mechanisms are present in one data source, the hypotheses and in-depth analysis of the data guide whether one or both mechanisms are sufficient to explain the policy outcomes. Lastly, if the mechanisms are not found empirically, the effect of the EU on Swedish social policy can be nonexistent. A relevant finding in itself given the EU’s recent social policy recommendations under the European Pillar of Social Rights (European Parliament, Council & Commission, 2017) – what are the implications of these recommendations if the EU has no domestic impact? It is also possible that the effect cannot be explained by the four established theories of social policy change, which would elucidate the need for new explanations of supra- and international social policy change.

The empirical fingerprints are evidence needed to support the hypotheses. These fingerprints do not cover all sources of EU influence. Still, they provide reliable, accessible, and sufficient data to confirm or reject the hypotheses. Hence, following Table 3, evidence confirming or rejecting the four hypotheses is predicted to be present in the European Court of Justice’s (ECJ) judgments; EU recommendations (here represented by the European Semester); traditional PRA actors’ reports and referral responses (here represented by unions confederation Landsorganisationen, hereafter LO, and the employer’s organisation confederation Svenskt Näringsliv, hereafter SN); and propositions from the Swedish government.
Accordingly, the data consists predominately of public documentation, similar to the data material used in previous process tracing examinations of Swedish social policy (Anderson, 1998). The selection of these sources is relevant and in line with the aim of the thesis. The ECJ is often described as a central EU institution and a critical player in EU integration (Alter, 2000; Stone Sweet, 2004); although recently adopted, the European Semester signals a major shift in the EU’s social policy governance and politics (Copeland & Daly, 2018); LO and SN are two key Swedish social partners, both presently and historically; and governmental proposition constitutes central documents on how and in what ways domestic politicians rule.

**Causal Mechanism: Institutionalist Theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors or Institutions</th>
<th>Part 1: Modes of EU Governance</th>
<th>Part 2: Domestic Politics</th>
<th>Part 3: Policy Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU institutions</td>
<td>Politicians and policy makers dependant on the new institutional context</td>
<td>Politicians and policy makers dependant on the new institutional context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Restrict unemployment policy, but not family policy, under new ‘rules of the game’</td>
<td>Experience a new institutional logic influencing social policy formation (i.e., old policy-feedback is broken)</td>
<td>Implement “EU” policies at the domestic level, confirming the new rules of the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical fingerprints</td>
<td>Restrictions by (i) judicial conditions under the EU, and (ii) recommendations from the European Commission</td>
<td>Domestic policy formation in government propositions</td>
<td>Policy making in government propositions becomes more similar to EU rules over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Causal Mechanism: Power Resource Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors or Institutions</th>
<th>Part 1: Modes of EU Governance</th>
<th>Part 2: Domestic Politics</th>
<th>Part 3: Policy Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU policymakers, politicians, and institutions</td>
<td>Lefist actors, on the one side, and rightist actors, on the other - all dependant on the EU policy</td>
<td>Domestic policymakers, responsive to the collective actors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Change traditional avenues for mobilisation and organisation of collective interests</td>
<td>Experience constrains, on the one side, and opportunities on the other, for collective formation of interest</td>
<td>Respond and make decisions based on leftists weakening power (cutsbacks in unemployment benefits) and rightists actors growing power (expansion of parental leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical fingerprints</td>
<td>How is the EU perceived and used by traditional PRA actors in reports, referral responses</td>
<td>Lefist actors expressing negative sentiments/ constraints about the EU, and rights actors expressing positive sentiments/opportunities about the EU</td>
<td>Actors and interests represented in government propositions initiating policy change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Causal Mechanism: New Politics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors or Institutions</th>
<th>Part 1: Modes of EU Governance</th>
<th>Part 2: Domestic Politics</th>
<th>Part 3: Policy Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU policymakers, and institutions</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>Domestic policy makers and politicians that depend on citizens to stay in office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Demands and recommend dismantling unemployment - but not family policy</td>
<td>Accept/favour cutsbacks in unemployment policy rather than family policy</td>
<td>Dismantle unemployment benefits by blaming the EU, but not parental leave due to (i) no demands to blame, or (ii) too much public support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical fingerprints</td>
<td>Social policy recommendations in EU directive and from the European Commission</td>
<td>Public support for unemployment - vis-a-vis parental leave policies in times of austerity</td>
<td>Blame on the EU in government propositions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Causal Mechanism: New Social Risks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors or Institutions</th>
<th>Part 1: Modes of EU Governance</th>
<th>Part 2: Domestic Politics</th>
<th>Part 3: Policy Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU policymakers, politicians, and institutions</td>
<td>Politicians, and policy makers under influence of the EU policy</td>
<td>Domestic policymakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Promote the protection of NSR (i.e., family policy) and not old risks (i.e., unemployment policy)</td>
<td>Formulate their political preferences in accordance with EU’s promotion</td>
<td>Implement NSR social policies at the expense of old risk policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical fingerprints</td>
<td>Social policy recommendations in EU directive and from the European Commission</td>
<td>Temporal changes in social policy preferences in government propositions</td>
<td>NSR, but not old risk, are underlined in government propositions, growing over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Operationalisation of the causal mechanisms of Europeanisation of Swedish social policy. The table is a development of the causal mechanism described in Figure 1.
All the data is accessible online at legal and policy databases or archives and contain search function (see Appendix). Using the search function, a first systematic selection of 1863 documents was made targeting aspects related to social policy, social security, welfare, the labour market, and the EU. After that, a second selection of 339 documents was made based on the title and introduction of the case/report/proposition. The second inclusion/exclusion criteria varied depending on the source as a consequence of the institutions’ or actors’ policy focus. As far as possible, inclusion was based on the document being about specific aspects of unemployment policy or parental leave or general aspects of social security, family policy, labour market, and welfare. As shown in the table below, documents with a specific focus on other social insurances, welfare issues, worker’s rights, and labour market questions were not included. However, as public documents – especially social partners’ reports – can discuss more than one issue, some overlap remains. Table 4 gives an overview of the data and data selection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area selected/ search words used</th>
<th>ECI</th>
<th>The European Semester</th>
<th>LO</th>
<th>Svenskt Näringsliv</th>
<th>Propositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Court: Court of Justice and General Court, b) Documents: Judgments Period from 01/01/1990 to 31/12/2019, c) Subject treated: “social security”, “social policy”, “employment”</td>
<td>a) “Sweden”, b) No further specification were used, all recommendations are covered</td>
<td>a) Type reports, referral responses, b) Date of publication 2001-2019, c) Subject: labour market, “international”, “insurer”, “welfare”</td>
<td>a) Type: reports, referral responses, b) Year: 2001-2019, c) Subject: “labour market”, “EU/EURO”, “social insurance”, “competitiveness”, “welfare”</td>
<td>a) Document type: propositions, b) Year: 1990-2019, c) Subject: socialförsäkringsutskottet, arbetsmarknadsutskottet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First selection (Total: 1863)</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second selection (Total: 339)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Unemployment policy, family policy, social security (broadly), equal treatment in social insurance, Swedish cases</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>Unemployment policy, family policy, social security (broadly), welfare issues, labour market, EU</td>
<td>Unemployment policy, family policy, social security (broadly), welfare issues, labour market, EU</td>
<td>Unemployment policy, family policy, labour market policy, welfare issues, EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>Equal treatment (broadly), discrimination, working-time, other insurances (e.g., pension, sickness, accident, invalidity)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>Other insurances (e.g., pension, sickness, accident, invalidity), gender equality</td>
<td>Other insurances (e.g., pension, sickness, accident, invalidity), gender equality</td>
<td>Budget propositions, other insurances (e.g., pension, sickness, accident, invalidity), gender equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Data and data selection. Since all country reports of the European Semester are included, the inclusion/exclusion criteria is not applicable. ‘Socialförsäkringsutskottet’ and ‘Arbetsmarknadsutskottet’ are not policy areas, but governmental sections of the Swedish Riksdag that prepares questions related to social insurance and the labour market, respectively.

In the last stage, the hypotheses (and initially the theoretical perspectives) work as a coding framework where qualitative evidence and quotes confirming or rejecting each hypothesis were systematically searched and identified as diagnostic evidence. Hence, for each hypothesis, a summary of diagnostic evidence was collected and synthesised to test whether they provide a sufficient empirical explanation of the causal mechanism. In this way, the empirical examination links to the four initial theories, creating reliability from previous research. The 339 documents were not read in full. As process tracing uses diagnostic evidence, looking for material that confirms or rejects the hypotheses, rather than all the material, is feasible. Given that the thesis examines macro trends of the EU’s influence over 29 years, the likeliness of missing critical diagnostic evidence of impact decreases. If the EU has an influence as operationalised above, it will leave evidence in more than one document. Additionally, in the
case of the operationalisation of the NP hypothesis, the analysis also includes public opinion data from the SOM-institute (2023). As Table 4 shows, the critical limitation is the time period of the different data sources. This is either due to the actor or institution not being active at the time (the European Semester before 2011 and SN, in its current form, before 2001) or lack of digitalised data material (LO before 2001). In part, the limitations of each source are mitigated by the use of multiple empirical sources, all years are covered by more than one source, and the mechanisms examined are broad enough to leave evidence at many sources and points in time. Moreover, the propositions often contain information on the social partners’ stand on the issue, giving access to their views before 2001.

3.4 Ethical Considerations
With the data used in the thesis, there is little chance that any individual has taken harm or that their privacy has been violated (cf., Swedish Research Council, 2017: 7). All data are official documents from the EU, the Swedish government, or social partners and no person-level data is used. The critical ethical issue of process tracing is instead validity and reliability. Due to the within-case and non-probabilistic data collection, process tracing practices are often said to involve bias and cherry-picking. To mitigate these tendencies, transparency and openness to scrutiny are key (Beach, 2016; Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 120). This has been pursued by formulating the mechanisms broadly within an established theoretical framework to give equal weighting to each potential explanation; systematically selecting, collecting, and assessing the data material during the empirical work; being suspicious of evidentiary sources; and catalog the evidence used (see Appendix) (Bennett & Checkel, 2014; Checkel & Bennett 2014; Kay & Baker, 2015; Swedish Research Council, 2017: 10-16).

4. Analysis
The following section presents the results and analysis of the process tracing, testing the four hypotheses, starting with institutionalism theory (IT), followed by the power resources approach (PRA), new politics (NP), and new social risk (NSR). First in each subsection, it is stated what evidence is expected to be found given the hypotheses and their operationalisation, and whether there is evidence sufficient to confirm the hypotheses. After that, the reasons for confirmation or rejection are outlined before delving into the evidence of that conclusion.
4.1 Europeanisation as Institutionalism

The IT hypothesis expects domestic social policy formation to be constrained by EU institutions in relation to unemployment insurance but not parental leave. Hence, the hypothesis points towards looking at evidence in the European Semester recommendations and ECJ rulings and how this corresponds to domestic policy formation in governmental propositions. Based on the informed systematic selection of such sources, evidence rejecting the IT hypothesis was found.

The comparison of the European Semester documents, the 101 judgments of the ECJ, and the 106 governmental propositions provide evidence of the EU institutionalising active labour market policies (ALMPs) and family policies more than the passively oriented unemployment insurance. However, as ALMPs and family policies were a central facet of Swedish social policy before the EU accession, no misfit between the EU and Sweden exists, and the EU is thereby unable to be a driver of the mechanism of institutionalism. The hypothesis is thus rejected. After a general note on the European Semester, this subsection highlights evidence from three institutional trends supporting this finding: the ECJ’s coordination of social security, the European employment strategy, and the EU’s family policy directives.

That there is little misfit between the EU and Sweden is clear in the recommendations of the European Semester. As shown in Figure 2, Sweden stands out with the least recommendations among all countries, confirming the description of Sweden as a policy leader (Johnson, 2005) and signifies that the Commission considers Sweden to be aligned with the Semester’s economic and fiscal framework. Moreover, it also signifies that few actual recommendations exist that plausibly can alter the rules of the game in Swedish social policy formation. Moreover, 74 percent of Sweden’s recommendations concern youth employment, education, and housing, unlikely to bolster any of the two developments observed in Sweden.
The first of the three institutional trends has to do with EU Directive 1408/71/EEC (1971) (replaced by EU Directive 883/2004/EC (2004)), giving the EU competence to coordinate social security schemes within the Union. This means that this regulation, and ultimately the ECJ, decides how social security applies to persons moving within the EU.

The purpose of EU Directives 1408/71/EEC and 883/2004/EC is to ensure the freedom of movement of employed and self-employed persons within the EU. Receiving or qualifying for social security benefits is not allowed to be an obstacle if a worker (and their family) wants to move within the EU. As ruled by the ECJ, this can for instance imply: a worker living in one Member State and working in another cannot be denied unemployment benefits in the country of work based on residential requirements (C-199/91; C-57/96; C-62/91); qualification for an income-based parental leave benefit in the country of residence cannot be restricted based on employment or self-employment in another Member State (C-257/10); and an employed person whose children lives in another Member State cannot be denied family benefits (C-266/95; C-4/95). Importantly, in the cases related to EU Directive 1408/71/EEC, the ECJ says nothing about the content of the national insurance, which remain outside the court’s jurisdiction:

[…] the Member States remain competent to define the conditions for granting social security benefits, even if they make them more strict, provided that the conditions adopted do not give rise to overt or disguised discrimination between Community workers (C-88/95: §8; see also C-275/96: §29; C-320/95: §25; C-340/94; C-135/99).

Additionally, the court actively states that it “provides for the coordination, not the harmonization, of the legislation of the Member States” (C-221/95: §16; see also C-103/06: §20; C-393/99). Hence, the ECJ judges in favour of the four freedoms, but there is no evidence of explicit restrictions made by the ECJ on the content of Sweden’s social insurance schemes.

EU Directives 1408/71/EEC and 883/2004/EC are present in the Swedish propositions, and the Swedish government stated even before the accession that adjustments in the social security provision are needed to fulfill the EU’s criteria (Prop. 1993/94: 209, p. 110). Still, as also visible in the ECJ judgments, the adjustments are not about the content of the insurances but on limitations regarding habitual residence:

Another question is whether Sweden’s membership in the EU has repercussions on how Swedish social insurance should be defined or delimited. Initially, it can be stated that the Rome Treaty does not grant the EU any general competence to set norms regarding social insurance. However, to ensure and promote free movement within the EU; coordination rules exist for individuals moving across boarders or otherwise linked to more than one
EU country. […] However, this does not imply that social insurance must be defined or delimited in a specific way (Prop. 1998/99:199, p. 75, author’s translation)

As visible in the quote and elsewhere (e.g., Prop. 199394:209, p. 110; Prop. 1996/97:107, p. 156; Prop. 2003/03:152, p. 244; Prop. 2009/10:223, p. 24; Prop. 2009/10: 7), the Swedish government recognizes that the free movement extends the persons subject to the domestic social security system beyond Sweden’s borders. However, it is unlikely that this enforces any constraints to Sweden’s unemployment insurance (and facilitates the parental leave system) since the individual cases are relatively few, and national variation in social security can remain (as duly recognised by the ECJ and Sweden’s government), and the EU Directive 1408/71/EEC does not distinguish between unemployment- and parental leave insurance in a way that can constrain the development of one but not the other.

Unlike EU Directive 1408/71/EEC, The European employment strategy does not provide any jurisdiction present in the 101 ECJ cases. However, it does provide economic ALMP incentives through the European Social Fund (ESF), as demonstrated in several Swedish government propositions. The ESF has a clear ALMP focus and is the EU’s fiscal instrument to implement the employment strategy and funds national, regional, and local employment projects.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, Sweden proposed several ALMPs with co-financing from the ESF, such as educational employment practice (Prop. 1994/95:218) and competence development of already employed (Prop. 1999/00:98; Prop. 2002/03: 44), arguing that:

The employment strategy, whose direction Sweden has actively influenced, aligns with Swedish labour market policy and primarily entails preventing long-term unemployment among societal groups through increased prioritization of education and active labour market policies (Prop. 1998/00:98, p. 46-47, author’s translation).

In one of the government propositions, 2 750 million SEK (approximately 20 percent of the total cost) is provided by ESF, simultaneously as the Swedish government underlines the “important premise that [national] labour market policy, like policies in other relevant areas, should align with the guidelines of the employment strategy” (Prop. 2002/03:44 p. 41).

This evidence demonstrates that the EU has both an economic (negative integration) and an ideological (frame integration) influence on ALMPs and that it affects Sweden. Such a substantial influence on the active side of employment policies could potentially withdraw focus from passive policies like unemployment insurance. Yet, as the Swedish government states in the quote above, and as previous research has underlined (Björnberg, 2012), ALMPs
have had a central position in Swedish employment policy already before the EU accession. Since ALMPs did not conflict with the existence of generous unemployment insurance historically in Sweden, it is unlikely that EU influence would rearrange what is prioritised.

While the occasions of national unemployment insurance schemes becoming subject to judgments of the ECJ is limited to EU Directive 1408/71/EEC, court cases involving issues of family policies are subject to several EU directives. For instance, the EU’s so-called Maternity Directive (EU Directive 92/85/EEC (1992), applied in C-284/02; C-411/96; C-167/12), providing the granted right to continuous maternity leave for at least 14 weeks and compulsory maternity leave for at least two weeks before and/or after confinement. And the EU’s Parental Leave Framework (EU Directive 96/34/EC (1996), applied in C-588/12; C-512/11; C-486/18; C-33/18), granting employees the right to take unpaid leave to care for children for at least three months per parent until the child reaches the age of eight. Although the generosity and the duration of the EU’s maternity- and parental insurance are limited compared to Swedish standards, the directives signify a key element of the EU’s family policy influence – it regulates the *content* of national social policy schemes, unlike EU Directive 1408/71/EEC.

The evidence from the government propositions shows that the EU’s Maternity Directive directly affects Swedish social policy. Still, the government considers the requirements of the directive to be fulfilled in Sweden. The changes imposed by it are thus only requiring a language and legal-technical recognition of the directive (Prop. 1999/00:87; Prop. 1994/95:207, p. 1, 34). The same is predominantly the case for the EU’s Parental Leave Framework:

The directive’s rule regarding the right to parental leave is fulfilled through the provisions of the [Swedish] Parental Leave Act, which grant the right to full leave to care for children until the child reaches 18 months. The Parental Leave Act also fulfills the directive’s minimum requirements concerning qualification criteria, application provisions, and other regulations related to parental leave (Prop. 1997/98:81, p. 10, *author’s translation*).

Clearly, Sweden recognises the direct impact of the EU regulation on the Swedish parental leave system with regard to qualification criteria, application provision, and more, but the effect in terms of social policy change is small since Sweden already fulfilled the requirements.

In sum, while the EU institutionalises ALMPs and family policy (predominantly by negative integration) in a way that may matter for other Member States, Sweden’s historical preference for the same social policies implies that the EU did not cause the Swedish policy formation. The mechanism of institutionalism thus fails to explain the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy with respect to unemployment- and family policy.
4.2 Europeanisation as Power Resources

The PRA hypothesis expects leftist actors to be weakened and rightist actors to be strengthened by the modes of governance of the EU, in turn affecting policy outcomes. Hence, the hypothesis points towards looking at evidence of a two-stage process: first, how EU institutions influence social partners’ (perception of) power resources, and second, whether the social partners succeed in advocating for their interest in governmental decisions or not. The evidence is mixed, providing support for the former but not the latter.

On the one hand, evidence from the 123 documents of the social partners shows that the EU is enhancing commodification practices opposed by Landsorganisationen (LO) and favored by Svenskt Näringsliv (SN), reaffirming the traditional PRA conflict through negative integration. There are also court cases where ECJ undermines the power of Swedish unions through positive integration. On the other hand, while the evidence of a power shift is clear, the evidence of how the shift transfers to the two policy outcomes is limited. I explain this finding by focusing on these two developments in turn.

Comparing LO’s and SN’s perception and use of the EU in the policy documents from a general perspective, the evidence shows that LO sees more issues with the EU concerning aspects such as judicial primacy (LO, 2005a; 2012a), marketisation (LO, 2005b), and social dumping (LO, 2004a; 2013a). SN, in contrast, underlines that Sweden is heavily dependent on exports and views the EU as a possibility for Swedish businesses, growth, competition (SN, 2001; 2007), and welfare expansion (SN, 2017a; 2017b).

In the reviewed LO documents when Sweden’s membership was still recent, LO underlines that one of the labour movement’s most critical tasks to make the free movement of labour beneficial is to maintain “order and structure” in the labour market (LO, 2004a: 23; 2004b: 2, author’s translation). This is a reoccurring issue for the organisation, and in a report published eight years later, it explicitly asks “is the free movement of services compatible with the Swedish labor market model?” (LO, 2012a, author’s translation). Evidently, LO sees a conflict of interest between Sweden’s high social standards and the open market, which confirms the PRA notion of social policy as politics regulating the market (Esping-Andersen, 1985; Korpi, 1983). Further in line with the theory, SN, on its side, favours the competition that the EU’s internal market creates for Swedish businesses and thereby opposes national barriers:

Svenskt Näringsliv agrees that the internal market is one of the EU’s greatest successes and supports the EU Commission’s ambition to breathe new life into it so that markets for
goods and services can function better. Svenskt Näringsliv represents many companies engaged in cross-border trade within the EU. Therefore, it is essential that barriers to free movement within the internal market are removed and that the freedom of establishment is fully respected (SN, 2016a: 1, *author’s translation*).

Consequently, commodification practices, the opposite of what the PRA considers the centre piece of welfare development, is the EU’s greatest benefit, according to SN. The example of monetary and fiscal policy can be added to the list of reaffirmed conflicts. In light of the 90’s crisis, SN means that the EU accelerated Sweden’s budget process becoming stricter and fiscal policy targeting balance in public finances, aligning with the politics of the European Central Bank (SN, 2001: 15-17). These new fiscal priorities are visible in government propositions (Prop. 1993/94:66; Prop. 1993/94: 80; Prop. 1993/04: 209). SN welcomes stricter policies, which, as known from previous research, often implies austerity in unemployment programs (Anderson, 1998). Years later, LO argues that the same economic principles limit Sweden:

> The possibility of expansionary fiscal policies is severely restricted. Member states are expected to save their way out of economic downturns and pay off government debt when the economy allows for it. The ability to invest a country out of a recession or pursuing an ambitious welfare policy could become very challenging (LO, 2011a:3, *author’s translation*).

There is limited evidence within the European Semester signifying that it amplifies the division among traditional PRA actors. A central and recurring recommendation in the Semester is that Sweden should improve the integration of youth and immigrants into the labour market (European Commission, 2011; 2012; 2014; 2017; 2018; 2019). These recommendations correspond to LO’s (2006a; 2006b; 2013b) request for improved transition through education and activity support, internships, and wage subsidies, and SN’s (2015a; 2016b) argument for lower employers’ social security contributions when employing youth. Since the Semester reflects notions on both sides, neither is strengthened more than the other. However, as the quote below demonstrates, in one occasion where SN actively refers to the Semester, the organisation welcomes the EU’s active involvement:

> The EU’s responsibility is stimulating member states to implement necessary structural reforms and to maintain their economies in good macroeconomic balance. […]. The open method of coordination on employment and social protection needs to be strengthened and streamlined within the framework of the European Semester. Therefore, the EU should encourage national reforms to enhance competitiveness across Europe (SN, 2017c: 10, *author’s translation*).
The influence of the ECJ is more distinct. As the previous section on Europeanisation as institutionalism outlined, most court cases involve individual workers moving within the Union. However, one case stands out by directly affecting LO’s power resources – the Laval case in 2007 (C-341/05). When a Latvian company contracted by the Swedish government to renovate schools refused to sign collective agreements proposed by the Swedish Building Worker’s Union (part of LO), the workers went on strike. The company then argued that the blockade hindered its right to free movement of services under EU law and went to court. The Swedish labour court referenced for a primary ruling by the ECJ asking if it was compatible with the free movement within the EU to persuade foreign companies to sign collective agreements through blockade. ECJ ruled:

The right of trade unions of a Member State to take such collective action is liable to make it less attractive, or more difficult, for undertakings to provide services in the territory of the host Member State and, therefore, constitutes a restriction on the freedom to provide services within the meaning of Article 49 EC (C-341/05 §99).

For LO that stated already in 2004 that “the trade union movement can only accept a common market if there is a stable social regulatory system that protects workers in all countries” (LO, 2004c: 7, author’s translation), the Laval case signifies an attack on the Swedish model. Afterward, LO “claimed that the informal trust pact is broken and that the European trade union movement’s support for continued European integration can no longer be taken for granted” (LO, 2012a:14, author’s translation; see also LO, 2011b: 3). The ECJ’s judgment forces the rightist Reinfeldt government to change the labour law (Prop. 2009/10:48), stating that unions’ industrial actions, like those in the Laval conflict, are only allowed if the employees can demonstrate that they have conditions that are worse than the minimum conditions stated in a centrally decided industry agreement. The law was adjusted by the Social Democrats (SAP) in 2017, making the Swedish interpretation of the original judgment less strict, which reduced the consequences of the ECJ ruling. Still, it remained stricter than pre-Laval. In a referral response to SAP’s adjustment, SN rejects the proposal, arguing that it is against EU law:

The abolition of the evidence rules risks leading to extensive restrictions on postings to Sweden. As stated by the Swedish parliament in 2011, the result will be a significant barrier to free movement and discrimination against foreign companies (SN, 2016c: 6, author’s translation).

In sum, although the ECJ rarely is involved in matters that affect the design of social insurance systems other than social security coordination (EU Directive 1408/71/EEC (1971)), the Laval
sentence demonstrates that judgments in the field of labour law and the internal market weakens the power resources of Swedish unions. The right to strike is a centre piece in how unions advocate for their interest. Given SN’s opposition to the adjustments in 2017, and its payment of the Latvian company’s court costs (C-341/05), it is evident that the employers’ organisation uses the opportunity in their favour. This use of EU law as leverage is present outside specific cases as well: In the late 2010s, when SAP wanted to reduce profitability in Sweden’s deregulated public welfare sector, the influence of the supremacy of EU-law regulating market competition gave SN strength to counter the proposal, stating that such reforms would interfere with property rights, free movement, and freedom of establishment under the EU jurisdiction (SN, 2015b: 32; 2017b: 4). The source of power resources is thus moved to the EU level.

Consequently, evidence confirms that the EU has weakened the position of Swedish unions and strengthened employers’ organisations – or at least supporting their cause. Yet, the documents of the social partners give weaker evidence of how this affects the social policy outcomes.

Fiscal discipline and economic budgetary plans are the official objectives of the European Semester (European Commission, 2011). Additionally, evidence from the 60 policy documents of SN shows that it uses free trade and commodification incentives, fiscal policy suggestions, and EU jurisdiction to bolster its stance within Swedish domestic politics. Although there are no explicit recommendations from the EU concerning stricter unemployment insurance, SN’s perspective accentuates the centrality of market competition, confirming the same market dynamic as elsewhere. The stricter controls and increased sanctions on unemployment insurance are all part of a flexible labor market, promoting high employment rates and enhancing the international competitiveness of Swedish corporations (SN, 2015c: 22; 2015d: 20; 2016d). There is thus a reappearing logic between SN’s views on market competition, how it uses the EU’s influence, and how it motivates cutbacks in unemployment insurance. However, it is critical to note that the EU did not cause these formulations of SN, which always represented the market. Still, the EU creates space and legitimacy for this type of politics, as SN’s use of EU law in their argumentation demonstrates.

Simultaneously as SN received political leverage, LO is in another position. Firstly, unlike employers’ organisational rate, membership rates in labour unions have declined since the 1990s (Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022). Secondly, unlike SN, who has rarely commented on the negative development of unemployment insurance, LO recurrently agitates against the government’s decision to disinvest in employment policies in general (LO, 2006a; 2014a) and cutting the unemployment insurance in particular (LO, 2007a: 2; 2008a: 30; 2013c). And, as
we know, LO fails to advocate for their interest since no policies that turn the downward trend are implemented. Thirdly, the Laval sentence undermines one of the most central collective resources of trade unions – the right to strike – and must be regarded as evidence of the EU constraining the mobilisation of left-leaning actors.

Hence, concerning the representation of interests, the EU’s role in SN’s enhanced position and LO’s weakened is in line with reducing the generosity of the unemployment insurance. But why no dismantling of the parental leave insurance?

The only notable evidence on parental leave in the social partners’ policy documents is that that they say little about family policy overall, and when they do, both sides are positive. For SN, investing in childcare is more cost-effective than ALMPs later in life (SN, 2015: 40), and parental leave is a critical part of work-life balance facilitating the supply of competence in the labour force (SN, 2015f: 1). For LO, an equal parental leave system is critical in facilitating women’s labour market participation (LO, 2006c) and they thus request more quotas (LO, 2019). This combination of silence and positivity from both sides signifies that the social partners are satisfied with the political development in the policy area and generally agree on family policies, as opposed to unemployment policy. Based on this logic, the present political development undermining the unions would matter less for the development of the Swedish parental leave insurance than unemployment, which confirms previous research conclusion that family policies have a weaker connection to the left-right dimension in power resources, being promoted broadly (Duvander et al., 2005). Yet, as the social partners seldom mention parental leave in the reviewed policy documents other than what is mentioned above, this conclusion remains limited. In sum, there is evidence of EU modes of governance that weaken leftist actors and strengthen rightist actors (through negative- and positive integration), but evidence of how it transfers to the policy outcomes is limited. The mechanism of the PRA explains part of the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy as EU has a clear influence on conflict between the traditional PRA actors but there is limited evidence on how this affects the two policy outcomes.

4.3 Europeanisation as New Politics

The NP hypothesis expects Swedish politicians, pressured by austerity, to initiate unemployment insurance cuts by blaming EU demands and expanding parental leave due to the lack of EU demands and/or the policy’s broader public support. Hence, the hypothesis points towards looking at evidence of public opinion, demands from EU level institutions/actors, and
explicit blaming of the EU in governmental propositions. Evidence rejecting the NP hypothesis was found based on the informed systematic selection of such sources.

While the evidence of public support for a large public sector confirms the relevance of politicians’ use of blame avoidance to stay in office, no evidence of this strategy in practice was found. No EU demands from the ECJ nor the Commission were distinct enough to blame, and there was no explicit blame of the EU in the government propositions that initiated the major unemployment insurance reforms. I explain the three parts of this conclusion below.

NP theory argues that austerity forces governments to dismantle social policies despite their broad support, generating the need for the strategy of blame avoidance (Pierson, 1996). It is reasonable to think that parental leave would receive wider support as it benefits more people than unemployment insurance (there were approximately 357% more beneficiaries of Swedish parental leave- than unemployment insurance in 2022, Försäkringskassan 2022; IAF, 2022). Longitudinal data on public support for specific social policies for longer time periods are scarce and comparing public support for unemployment- and parental leave policies in relation to the reforms made is thus not possible. However, the SOM-Institute (2023) provides data on public opinion regarding the public sector, indicating the extent to which the public generally supports cutbacks. Figure 3 displays public support (in percentages) answering the proposal: “Reduce the public sector”.

![Figure 3. Public opinion in Sweden answering the proposal: "Reduce the public Sector". The table displays the percentage of the sample each year; answering the question based on any of the three categories "Bad proposal", "neither good or bad proposal", and "good proposal". Data from the SOM-Institute (2023).](image)

Except for the early 1990s, the trends are relatively stable, showing that reducing the public sector is continuously regarded as a “bad proposal” by most Swedes. The public sector is more than social insurance, yet this demonstrates the relevance for politicians to apply the strategy of blame avoidance since a large part of the electorate opposes cutting the public sector. The early 1990s marked a turning point for dismantling Swedish social policy and, as visible, a considerable shift in public opinion. Reasonably, when the first major reforms of
unemployment insurance (and other areas) were implemented in the early 1990s simultaneously as unemployment rates surged, the public changed their need and view of the public sector. This, too, demonstrates the relevance of politicians to put the blame elsewhere if they want to continue dismantling the welfare system while staying in office. In sum, the public opinion data underlines the (potential) relevance of politicians to use the NP mechanism of blame avoidance. However, as for actual demands to blame, the process tracing provided insufficient evidence of EU demands strong enough to give domestic politicians the opportunity of blame avoidance. As shown in Figure 2, the European Semester has few demands on Sweden compared to other countries, and none of the recommendations concern unemployment insurance or the social insurance system as a whole. Some employment regulations are recommended, such as improving vulnerable groups’ labour market participation (European Commission, 2014; 2018), expanding education levels and education-labour transitions (European Commission, 2016; 2017), and countering the high unemployment rates (European Commission, 2017). Yet, these recommendations are nothing that can be blamed when dismantling the unemployment insurance since they are focusing on entirely other employment issues. Plus, the major cutbacks happened before the time period of the Semester.

The evidence from the ECJ points in the same direction. As noted in the subsection on institutionalism, the ECJ’s influence on social security mainly emanates from EU Directive 1408/71/EEC on the coordination of social security schemes. Since the EU’s jurisdictions based on this regulation is the same regardless of whether it concerns unemployment- or parental leave insurance, the limitations under the directive cannot offer gateways for blame avoidance pertaining to one of the policies but not the other, making ECJ influence and EU Directive 1408/71/EEC unfit to explain the diverging outcomes through the mechanism of NP.

This leaves us with the propositions. If blame avoidance in relation to the EU appeared in Sweden, the empirical evidence of it should be evident during the most extensive reforms of the unemployment insurance in 1993-1995 and 2007-2008. Sweden was in an unprecedented economic crisis in 1990-1995, and when unemployment rates rose, the cost of the unemployment insurance system skyrocketed from five to thirty-five billion SEK between 1990 and 1996 (Prop. 1996/97:107, p. 84). These increased costs are a critical motivation for why the first reforms of the unemployment system were initiated by the Bildt government, which states the following in one of the government propositions set out to reform the system: ”A reform of the cash benefits for unemployment is an important part of the consolidation of public expenditures. Decisions have already been made regarding an 80 percent compensation level
and waiting days” (Prop. 1993/04:209, p. 63, author’s translation; see also Prop 1993/94: 80). Hence, the economic situation, and not the EU, is blamed – a situation which the Bildt government holds the careless fiscal policy of the SAP in the 1980’s accountable for (Prop. 1991/92:124, p. 12). At the same time, the EU is viewed more as a solution than an actor to blame. For instance, in 1991, SAP argued that EU membership, free trade, new markets, and deregulations would counter the recession (Prop. 1990/1991: 87, p. 184).

The only social security reforms initiated because of EU influence are parental leave reforms underlining parental leave rights – thus an expansion that opposes the NP hypothesis that is about retrenchment (see e.g., Prop. 1994/95:42). Although the Swedish government considers the EU’s Maternity Directive 92/85/EEC to be fulfilled, a change in the law should reaffirm it:

The evidence is similar during the 2007 and 2008 reforms. No demands coming from the EU level are mentioned as a motive behind why the unemployment system is once again dismantled, not even in the three most central government propositions that greatly affect the system (Prop. 2006/07:15; Prop. 2006/07:89; Prop 2007/08: 118). The only Swedish proposition that refers to the EU at the time of these reforms do it in a technical manner, related to EU Directive 1408/71/EEC on social security coordination and the eligibility of migrant workers to Swedish social security insurance (Prop. 2009/10: 7, p.11). No dismantling reforms are initiated based on the EU directive. And once again are more concrete EU demands cementing the generosity in Sweden’s parental leave system:

Through the EU Directive 96/34/EC on the Framework Agreement on Parental Leave (the so-called parental leave directive), the framework agreement on parental leave legislation, […], is implemented. This agreement includes a prohibition on dismissal and provisions concerning protection of position and employment conditions during parental leave (Prop. 2005/06: 185, p. 35, author’s translation).

In sum, while the public opinion’s view on the public sector is in line with the NP mechanism, evidence from the process tracing shows that the only reoccurring demand from the EU implies minor legal adjustments in maternity and parental leave, and in the 106 government propositions, EU is not used for the strategy of blame avoidance even once. Hence, the
mechanism of NP cannot explain the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy with respect to unemployment- and family policy.

4.4 Europeanisation as New Social Risks
The NSR hypothesis expects Swedish politicians to invest in the protection of new social risks, such as parental leave, and disinvest in old risks, such as unemployment insurance, due to pressures from the EU. Hence, the hypothesis points towards establishing if domestic politicians prioritise new risks rather than old, compare if this corresponds to influence from EU institutions and actors, and if this changes over time. Based on the informed selection of sources in this regard, only weak evidence was found to support the NSR hypothesis.

While there is evidence of the Swedish government investing in NSR and disinvesting in old risks in the 106 propositions and an emphasis on new social risks in the Semester and other EU incentives, only weak evidence of a causal influence from the EU on Swedish policy formation can be established. This subsection begins by highlighting the evidence from the domestic propositions and then from the EU level. Lastly, it is explained why there is only weak evidence of the EU being a driving force (through frame integration) of the NSR mechanism in Sweden.

Three of the structural processes argued to give rise to new social risks (cf., Bonoli, 2005; Taylor-Gooby, 2004, 2017) are present in the Swedish government’s propositions: globalisation, stagnating economic growth, and the rise of post-industrial labour markets that increase the importance of education and prevalence of long-term unemployment; women’s participation in the labour force; and increased privatisation.

In the early 1990s propositions, when the first cutbacks in social policies were initiated – simultaneously as unemployment rates increased and state finances failed – Swedish politicians’ understanding of the crisis had an evident NSR framing on global and economic factors:

The main reasons for today’s extensive unemployment are, on the one hand, the unfavorable Swedish cost situation and the speculative economy at the end of the 1980s. On the other, the international economic downturn during the early years of the 1990s and also a lack of long-term adaptation to structural changes in our global environment (Prop. 1993/94:209, p. 64, author’s translation).

Correspondingly, also the government’s identification of vulnerable groups in this situation follows the NSR framework, emphasising youth, immigrants, and (single-parent) families:
The deep recession of the 1990s severely impacted almost all groups and sectors. However, unemployment primarily affected individuals in the younger age groups, in other words, young people who were either in the process of establishing themselves or had relatively recently entered the labour market (Prop. 1999/00:98, p. 18, author’s translation; see also Prop. 1994/95: 218, p. 20).

The economic situation of families with children underwent substantial changes during the 1990s. Until the year 1997, the economic standard for families with children decreased. Particularly, single parents with two or more children and cohabiting parents with three or more children experienced relatively significant deterioration (Prop. 1999/00:98, p. 18, author’s translation; see also Prop. 1994/95: 218, p. 20).

Notably, in the government proposition from 1994-1995, SAP underlines the vulnerable situation of the youth simultaneously as they cut the maximum level of the unemployment benefits from 80% to 75% of earnings while referring to the pressured state finances (Prop. 1994/95: 218, p. 21). Instead of passive labour market supports (unemployment benefits), SAP wants to invest in targeted policies such as education, workplace-based training, or other activities (ALMPs) (ibid, p. 26). As opposed to this, the 2000-2001 government proposition that increases the flexibility and duration of parental leave to facilitate work-life balance is motivated by the rights of the child and gender equality outcomes and considered an investment (2000/01:44, p. 39f). Clearly – and this is a trend that reappears through the period of analysis – unemployment insurance and its beneficiaries are seen as costly and undeserving (see Prop. 2006/07: 15; Prop. 2008/09:127; Prop. 2012/13:12) while the parental leave insurance and facilitating women’s employment are investments (see Prop. 2007/08: 93; 2014/15:124).

Moreover, as known from the section on institutionalism, countering the weak labour market attachment of youth and immigrants with investments in ALMPs such as employment support (Prop. 1991/92: 124; Prop. 1993/94: 66) and reduced social security contributions when hiring young (Prop. 2006/07: 84; Prop. 2008/09: 7; Prop. 2013/14: 116) are a common feature of Swedish labour market politics 1990-2019. Investments in unemployment insurance are not.

The last process of privatisation enters, as the NSR theory suggests, as a consequence of the government’s need to cut the public sector and is especially pertinent during the 1990s, following an international deregulation trend:

Today, the activities of the public sector are seldom exposed to competition, and in such operations, there are not the same effective barriers against cost increases as in competitive activities. Therefore, the public sector must be subjected to more market-like conditions (Prop. 1990/91:87, p. 186, author’s translation).
On this account, the state monopoly of the Employment Agency on job placement is removed to increase competitiveness and facilitate labour market growth (Prop. 1992/93: 218). In other welfare state areas, such as education, health-, and elderly care, privatisation has become a central element in the Swedish political economy since the mid-90s (Blomqvist, 2004).

The EU’s role in the NSR processes is mixed in relation to Sweden. Previous research has underlined how the EU’s fiscal policy framework influenced Sweden’s tackling the economic crisis of the 1990s (Anderson, 1998). However, unlike the social partners who recognise this dimension, the evidence in the government propositions of the labour market- and social insurance committee is limited in this regard. Beyond that the EU is recognized as an essential part of taking Sweden out of the 90s recession (Prop. 1990/1991: 87, p. 184) and that the state monopoly of the Employment Agency on job placement might counter EU law on competition and thus should be deregulated (Prop. 1992/93: 218, p. 13), there is little evidence of the EU having a direct effect on the NSR mechanism in Sweden.

Still, the few Swedish recommendations of the European Semester compared to other Member States indicate that Sweden aligns with the objectives of the Commission. In 2012, it was recommended that Sweden “preserve a sound fiscal position” (European Commission, 2012), and in 2013, Sweden was recommended to “implement the necessary measures to pursue a growth-friendly fiscal policy and preserve a sound fiscal position” (European Commission, 2013). Both recommendations are considered fulfilled (the first) or seen substantial progress (the second) already in the reports one year later. Hence, the government’s propositions and the fiscal policies in the European Semester give weak evidence of EU pressures on NSRs.

If not for the temporal misalignment, Sweden’s many reforms targeting youth correspond to policy recommendations in the Semester focusing on the employment of low-skilled youth and people with a migrant background (European Commission, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015). The fact that recommendations appear despite the earlier NSR reforms proposed in the propositions and do so consistently signifies that the Commission disagrees with how Sweden targets the NSR groups. The discrepancy between the recommendations and the Swedish reforms implemented indicates that the recommendations have little impact on Sweden’s decision.

The 101 court cases from the ECJ give minor evidence that the court influenced the development of the NSR emphasised in the Swedish propositions. As known from the section on institutionalism, maternal and parental leave are subject to specific directives that repeatedly appear in ECJ judgments. Unemployment insurance is not. This confirms what has been
emphasised above, that the EU regulates NSRs more frequently and strongly than old risks, as highlighted elsewhere (Taylor-Gooby, 2004: 22).

Additionally, the ECJ rules on equal treatment for men and women in social security matters (EU Directive 79/7/EEC (1978), precluding national social security schemes from excluding women (or men) from social security schemes based on sex (C-284/02; C-123/19). In one case, the ECJ judged against Greece’s constitution and national collective agreements in this regard:

In the present case, the collective agreements and arbitration awards, providing for the grant of family and marriage allowances exclusively to married men workers amount to direct discrimination on grounds of sex inconsistent with Article […] (C-187/98 §44).

Accordingly, these EU directives, facilitating women’s labour market participation, give the ECJ substantial influence. However, since no judgments rule in favor of NSR at the expense of old risks, and Sweden is a forerunner also in terms of labour market equality, unlike Greece, the effect of these judgments on the Swedish context is likely small. Compared to the equal treatment of workers under EU Directive 1408/71/EEC, equal treatment of men and women under EU Directive 79/7/EEC is rarely mentioned in the government propositions.

The evidence from Sweden shows that the mechanism of NSR can explain the two diverging outcomes observed in Sweden through frame integration by exercising pressure on NSR investments. However, linking the mechanism to Europeanisation as a driving force, as required by the NSR hypothesis, at best, gives weak evidence of the EU influencing the mechanism. This is most distinctly demonstrated by the temporal misalignment between Sweden’s NSR reforms and the EU’s recommendations, as well as the directives that concerns family issues that are predominately already fulfilled in Sweden. Hence, the mechanism of NSR can explain minor parts of the Europeanisation of Swedish social policy.

5. Conclusion

Once widely considered an archetypical welfare state, Sweden broke the path of its social policy characteristics at the time of European integration. While comparative scholars using a quantitative approach have linked the process of Europeanisation to social policy decline in the Member States (Beckfield, 2019), studies focused on Sweden yield mixed results. On the one hand, it has been argued that Europeanisation affected social policy change during the 1990s (Anderson,
On the other, more recent studies reject that the EU influences social policy change in Sweden (Demokratirådet, 2010).

As prior studies generally focused on one type of explanation only, I addressed the contrasting findings by casting the net widely and examining four alternative explanations. I did so with the aim of tracing potential mechanisms of Europeanisation of Swedish social policy between 1990 and 2019 and to analyse whether and how the mechanisms can explain diverging outcomes in Sweden’s social policy in the last decades. Two research questions were asked:

1. How has Europeanisation affected unemployment policy and family policy in Sweden from 1990-2019?

2. To what extent can Europeanisation sufficiently explain the retrenchment in unemployment policy while family policies were expanded in the same period of time?

The answer to the first question can be provided by the confirmation or rejection of the hypotheses of the four alternative explanations: the institutionalism (IT) hypothesis, the power resource (PRA) hypothesis, the new politics (NP) hypothesis, and the new social risk (NSR) hypothesis. Based on the process tracing built upon a review of 339 political- and governmental documents, I found no support for the IT- and NP hypotheses, weak support for the NSR hypothesis, and mixed support for the PRA hypothesis. Hence, there is only limited evidence that Europeanisation has affected unemployment policy and family policy in Sweden through the mechanisms of new social risk and power resources.

Europeanisation by the NSR mechanism has affected unemployment- and family policies in Sweden to a minor extent. I find that the EU exercises frame integration through policy pressure toward investments in NSRs in the European Semester and family directives, but these pressures appear later in time than Sweden’s turn toward NSRs. This temporal misalignment means the EU cannot have caused Sweden’s early NSR investments and the disinvestments in old risk. Nor is it plausible that the EU fosters Sweden’s persistent targeting of NSR since there is an evident discrepancy between the NSR-related recommendations in the European Semester and the Swedish NSR reforms. Moreover, I find most maternal- and parental leave directives to be fulfilled almost immediately in Sweden. Hence, the EU might have played a role in Sweden’s continuation on the NSR path, but evidence suggests this impact is negligible.

The extent of the effect of Europeanisation by the PRA mechanism on Sweden’s unemployment- and family policies is best understood in two parts, the first with clear evidence and the second with only weak support. Firstly, I find that Swedish leftist actors, key to social
policy development, feel circumscribed by new opportunities under the EU’s negative integration, and rightist actors the opposite. Moreover, I find critical examples of positive integration where ECJ judgments directly undermine the collective power of Swedish unions. As for the second part, I find weak evidence of the extent to which this power shift affects the two diverging policy outcomes in Sweden. While the EU’s influence on the power resources of leftists vis-à-vis rightist actors aligns with reductions in unemployment insurance, as theorised by the PRA. The influence on parental leave insurance is more difficult to trace since it is seldom mentioned in the documents. This silence could signify the broader support of family policies across political groups. However, more data is needed to strengthen such claims.

To answer the second question on to what extent a sufficient causal explanation has been found, it is relevant to return to the thesis’s framing of the causal case in Figure 1, with the driving forces (i.e., the EU), the mechanisms (i.e., the four theories on social policy change), and the outcomes (i.e., unemployment insurance decline and parental leave expansion). The NSR mechanism provides a sufficient causal explanation between the mechanism and the outcomes but lacks evidence connecting it to the EU level in the case of Sweden. The PRA mechanism can provide a sufficient causal explanation between the driving force and the mechanism but provides weaker evidence linking this to the outcomes. In other words, neither the NSR nor the PRA mechanism can sufficiently explain the complete causal chain from driver to outcome.

The strongest theoretical contribution of the thesis is to cover the full causal chain with a broad set of theories. Quantitative comparative perspectives (Beckfield, 2019) can determine causal influence but not to what extent it takes place in specific countries, and previous qualitative studies focusing on Sweden (Anderson, 1998; Demokratirådet, 2010) examined only parts of the causal process. Since they looked at a limited set of theories without a strict test of diverging policy outcomes, whether there was EU influence depends on what part of the chain they looked at and which theory (i.e., mechanism) they had in focus. This is why casting a wider net has been critical: influence in some parts of the causal chain can be demonstrated, while the whole chain cannot be put together in a convincing way empirically.

The research design facilitating this theoretical contribution, qualitative process tracing, comes with two inherent limitations. The first is that process tracing requires considerable time and data to allow for causal claims, and the data of this study is limited by the reasonable time and scope of a master’s thesis. Including non-digitalised reports from Landsorganisationen (LO) and Svenskt Näringsliv (SN), data from additional social partners, and reports from SN’s predecessor Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen (SAF) could have strengthened the claims of the
PRA finding by providing more data on the social partners’ views on the policy outcomes. Conducting interviews with stakeholders in the Swedish context could also have expanded the scope of the thesis and the findings. Nevertheless, a substantial amount of material was covered, and the PRA finding, which is the hypothesis receiving the most support, offers relatively strong evidence of how the EU affects domestic politics but fails to explain how this transfers to the two policy outcomes. My findings do not say there is no general Europeanisation, nor am I saying there has not been a policy change in Sweden. Put simply, I find that the evidence of the second step from domestic political mechanism to policy outcome is too limited.

The second limitation is the focus on one country. Swedish unions are still notably strong in international comparison: in no other country outside the Nordics are union member rates as high as in Sweden (Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022). Following PRA logic, the EU’s social policy influence should be more evident elsewhere. However, the comparative dimension is another limitation of the thesis. The in-depth evidence of the Swedish case is not transferable to other contexts. Yet, by applying four theories to one case, the inherent complexity of social policy systems can be untangled, at least partly, to understand the causal chain better.

The fact that I did not find an apparent EU influence on the two policy outcomes does not mean it cannot occur in the future. In countries with a Ghent system that ties unemployment insurance to the unions, it is reasonable that if the power of the unions declines, it will affect the content of the unemployment insurance system. The EU’s role in LO’s perception of their power, actively countering LO in specific court cases, and being used as political leverage of LO’s counterpart are relevant findings on this account. The EU’s recent minimum wage Directive 2022/2041 (2022) and the Swedish union’s opposition towards it show that the EU continues to impact. In comparison, family policies would be less affected since they are not dependent on the power of the unions to the same extent. Further investigating how the unions work with and perceive the EU’s influence in qualitative interviews is one relevant step ahead.

The PRA and the NSR findings constitute another relevant avenue for future research. Untangling the potential interplay between these mechanisms and their relation to the EU is relevant – for instance, examining how the EU’s weakening of traditional leftist actors combined with its increased focus on NSRs affects the fall and rise of new advocacy groups and policy formation. The shift from blue-collar to white-collar union dominance in Sweden (Kjellberg & Nergaard, 2022) is one ongoing trend in this regard. Additionally, given recent findings that “old” social policies effectively reduce new risks (Alm et al., 2019), investigating the EU’s role in domestic social policy formations is critical.
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7. Appendix

The European Semester Country Specific Reports
Reports available at: https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/country-specific-recommendations-database/


Court Cases of the European Court of Justice (ECJ)
Search words used in the form: Court; Court of Justice and General Court. Documents; Judgements, Period from 01/01/1990 to 21/12/2019. Subject matter; “social security”, “social policy”, “employment”. Available at: https://curia.europa.eu/juris/recherche.jsf?language=en


Governmental Propositions from the Swedish Riksdag
Search words used in the form: Document type; propositions. Year; 1990–2019. Subject; “socialförsäkringsutskottet”, “arbetsmarknadsutskottet”. Available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/sok/

Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/country-specific-recommendations-database/
Reports and referral responses of Landsorganisationen (LO)


201a Den gemensamma skolan: LO:s ställningstagande angående kommunala skolor och "fristående" skolor.
201b Så har vi råd med utfärden.
202a Hur far can the work principle take us?
204a Arbetskraft till salu – sex månader med öppna gränser.
204b Stärk myndigheterna för mera ordning och reda på arbetsmarknaden.
204c Moderaterna och arbetstätten i EU – En rapport från LO/TCO Rättskydd
204d Alla behåvis! Blott arbetsmarknadspolitik skapar inga nya jobb.
204e Att åldras på arbetsmarknaden – politik för ett helt arbetsliv.
205a LO:s yttrande över Departementspromernsion Fördraget om upprättande av en konstitution för Europa (Ds 2004:52).
205b EU:s nya grundlag – Förslaget och fackliga kommentarer.
205c Europeisk överenskommelse om handlingsplan för kompetensutveckling i arbetslivet som en del av det livslånga lärande.
205d Förrådledare och arbetstid – hur mycket jobbar förrådare som varit hemma med barn.
205e Hur hög är arbetslösheten?
205f Letter to Commissioner Charlie McCreery.
205g LO:s strategi för arbetet och utveckling – Tillväxtrampa i sju steg.
205h LO:s yttrande över Promernia om överlämmande av ansvaret för driften av sjukhus till privata entreprenörer.
205i Tre synpunkter på skatteärskningar.
205j Vårfor föds det så få barn?
206a LO:s ståndpunkter kring delar av den aktiva arbetsmarknadspolitiken.
206b Vad innebär internationelliseringen?
206d EU – fackliga krav och utmaningar.
206e LO:s yttrande avseende utkast till regeringens proposition "En arbetslöshetsförsäkring för arbetet".
206f LO:s yttrande över Promernsion Finansiering av arbetslöshetsförsäkringen.
206g Livet är orättvist Ska politiken göra det värre? En studie av effekterna av moderaternas ekonomiska politik.
207a Arbetsmarknadspolitiken vid ett växelgång.
207b Trygghet på andra sidan sumpet? – Om flexibility i Danmark.
207c Vad händer med arbetslinjen? Ska arbetslösa ta första bästa jobb?
208a Trygghet och effektivitet, en bättre arbetslöshetsförsäkring – Om väglänen i sysselsättningspolitiken.
208b Välfärden kan finansieras utan skattehöjningar.
208c Yttrande över delbetänkande Obligatorisk arbetslöshetsförsäkring SOU 2008:54.
208d Yttrande över PM om Jämställdhetsbonus. Familjepolitisk reform (S2007/10 527/SF).
209a Arbetsmarknadspolitik i kristid – Hur lyckas vi bättre nu än på 1990-talet?
209b En sammanfattnings av LO:s alternativ till krispolitik mot arbetslösheten.
209c LO:s yttrande över Ds 2008:77 Förbättrande och förenklade villkor i arbetslöshetsförsäkringen"
209d LO:s yttrande över S2010/5246/SF, Tillfällig föräldrapenning i samband med att ett barn har avlidit, m.m.
209f EU:s förslag om ekonomisk styrning.
209g LO:s yttrande över Europeiska kommissionens grönbok om en modernisering av EU:s politik för offentlig upphandling.
209h En arbetslöshetsförsäkring vård namnet – LO:s ställningstaganden avseende arbetslöshetsförsäkringen
209j LO:s yttrande över Ds 2011:52. Förrådförsäkring (SOU 2011:52)
209k Demokrati som hinder för EU:s fria rörlighet? – Hur känns det olika för tjeckiskar förenligt med den svenska arbetsmarknadsmoden?
209l LO:s yttrande över Ds 2012/3 "Rättssäkerhet och likabehandling i arbetslöshetsförsäkringen"
209m Vinnare och förlorare – Om konkurrens mellan arbetskraftskostnader inom EU.
209n Förrådförsäkringstillägget – en ny förordning för ökad rättvisa och jämställdhet
209o Fritt fall i arbetslöshetsförsäkringen - Allt fler arbetslösa i Sverige saknar a-kassegrundad ersättning.
209p Åtgärder för att begränsa vinst i välfärden.
209q Hur långt räcker arbetstiden? Om sjunkande arbetslöshet och stigande ohälsa.
209r Arbetsmarknadsprogram utan aktivitetsstöd - Familj och kommuner i Sverige får täcka upp för arbetslöshetsförsäkringsens brister.
209s Saknas: En arbetslinje för omställning.
209t Den "nya" strukturomvandlingen? Jobbpolarisering och konkurrens om jobben.
209v Arbetsförmedlingen och arbetskraftsförmedlingen – missbedömd eller dömd att misslyckas?
209w Föräldrapenningstillägget – en ny förordning för ökad rättvisa och jämställdhet
209x Mer trygghet och bättre försäkring (SOU 2015:21)
209y Yttrande över remiss "EU på hemmaplan" (SOU 2016:10).
209z Förslag till LO:s remissyttrande över Slupad jämställdhetsbonus, Ds 2015:55.
209a1 Remissvar ang. Ordnung och reda i välfärden (SOU 2016:78).